SARON NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook: www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: *oleson@saronlutheran.org*

Marcus Roll, Senior Choir Director,
Bell Choir Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Margaret Froehlich, Administrative
Assistant
Megan Savage, Financial Secretary
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday Schedule at Saron:
During the School Year:
8:30 & 11:00 A.M. Worship
Childcare provided
9:40 Learning for Ages 2 – Adult

Summers (thru Labor Day weekend):
9:30 Holy Communion
Childcare provided
No Learning Hour

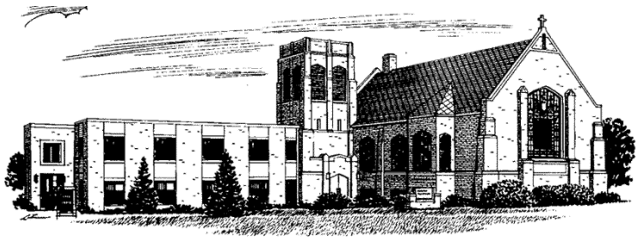
During the present Pandemic:
11:00 a.m. via Zoom

All are welcome!

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia

Saron's Mission:
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!



As I write this it is nearly the 2nd week in Lent. Who knew last year at this time that we'd still be in the midst of all the precautions and shutdowns of the pandemic. In some ways, it feels like Lent never ended. In fact, part of my Lenten discipline from 2020 I have continued to follow and plan to do so until I feel like Lent has more fully lifted.

Lent is a penitential time. It is a time of reflection. By the grace of God, we do these things knowing a new day is coming. A day of resurrection. In the meantime, we examine our hearts and prepare for the joy ahead.

Pastor Joan

Mid-Week Wednesdays in Lent

7 pm via Zoom
Theme: Plenty Good Room
In this devotional worship we will look at Scripture, American history, and the music and lyrics of six African American spirituals.

February 24 – "Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit,"
March 3 – "This Lonesome Valley"
March 10 - "Bow Down on Your Knees"
March 17 - "Plenty Good Room"
March 24 - "Ain't Dat Good News"
April 2 (Good Friday) - "Were You There?"

Holy Week
Palm/Passion Sunday – March 28, 11 AM via Zoom
Maundy Thursday – April 1, 7 PM via Zoom
Good Friday – April 2, 7 PM via Zoom
The Vigil of Easter – April 3, 7 PM via Zoom
The Resurrection of our Lord, Easter – April 4, 11 AM via Zoom

Caring and Sharing

In Our Prayers –

Richard Schalon is at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** is at Woodland Terrace.

Office Hours at Saron (these hours will vary during Covid-19)

Margaret (secretary): Mon-Tues, 9 AM - 1 PM
Weds of Newsletter Week, 9 AM - 1 PM
Volunteers: Weds, 9:15 AM - 11 AM (approximately)
Megan Savage(financial secy); Tues & Thurs 5:30 PM
financial@saronlutheran.org

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (983.1273) or contacting the president of the congregation.

Note: E-mails meant for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org. E-mails to Margaret and the church office should be addressed to info@saronlutheran.org.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members in March 2021

March 1 - Michael Hoodlebrink
4 – Krin Jurgensen
Caleb Pudell
8 – Austin Kamala
9 – Colbe Pudell
10 - Brad Frey
12 - Susan Rood
14 - Ruth Stelling
17 – Mia Bradley
18 – Peter Johnson
Constance Slater
19 - Karleann Stankiewicz
Alexander Tzouanakis
20 – Nicole (de la Foret) Rick
21 - Kaitlin (Huff) Hooper
22 – Janet Oleson
25 - Jim Nicholas
26 - Susan Bailey
27 - Eloise Moely
Shelly Stankiewicz
28 - Matthew Gacek
Zachary Ark

Happy Anniversary Wishes to the following Members in March 2021

March 2 - Tom and Janet Taylor

For additions or corrections, please call the church office at 983-1273. Thank you.

With Sympathy

We offer our sympathy to the family of Arla Huelsberg upon her death Sunday, February 7, at Pine Ridge Rehabilitation and Nursing Center. We keep her children Darlene, Larry, Jackie, and families in our prayers. A private service for Arla was held at Starks Chapel.
Her obituary can be found at https://memorials.starksfamilyfh.com/arla-huelsberg/4520916/index.php?_ga=2.254806350.772293182.1612746897-1949463744.1607465372

God is our refuge and strength. Psalm 46:1a

As anticipated, the Worship Enhancement Team has begun its work with a focus on accessibility. They were able to meet with a liturgical consultant to hear a fresh perspective and brainstorm what may or may not be possible with our space and resources. While not a complete list, these are some of things being considered as part of the journey: What would allow a less obstructive way to incorporate the bells and chimes? How can we provide personal freedom over seating location to those using a wheelchair or mobility assistive device? How can we ensure access to the chancel for all desiring to be a clergy or lay person assistant, even those not able to accommodate a step? Is there potential to enhance worship for our youth or those with cognitive or sensory challenges? How can we balance in person needs with maintaining an opportunity for remote presence? What are we not thinking about? As the task force moves forward, they will be looking for input from the congregation.

As of the end of January 2021, we had collected $326,851 towards our 3 year pledge total of $367,205. That's 89% of our goal! We are certainly demonstrating we are a congregation that joyfully gives even in the face of adversity. Thank you for your support!

Worship

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

Sunday Mar. 7 —
Third Sunday in Lent
Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19
I Corinthians 1:18-25
John 2:13-22

Sun. Mar. 14 —
Fourth Sunday in Lent
Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3,17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

Sun. Mar. 21 —
Fifth Sunday in Lent
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-12
Hebrews 5:5-10
John 12:20-33

Sun. Mar. 28 —
Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday
Procession with Palms: Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 14:1 — 15:47 or Mark 15:1-39-47

COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND LIAISONS

At our annual meeting on January 24, the following persons were elected two council – Molly Becker, 2nd term; Don Hafer, 2nd term; Karen Johnson, 2nd term; and Merrily Smith, 1st term. Congratulations to all.

At our February council meeting Karen Johnson was elected as president, Krin Jurgensen as vice-president, Scott Kohs as secretary, and Joe Ulrey as treasurer. Council members also volunteered as liaisons to Saron's various standing committees. They are Krin Jurgensen, worship; Jim Manore, learning; Merrily Smith and Molly Becker, youth; Karen Johnson (with Jim Manore), outreach; Deanna Deaton (with Merrily Smith), hospitality; Brad Frey and Scott Kohs, facilities; and Don Hafer (with Joe Ulrey, and Matt Bradley), support. Krin Jurgensen will be liaison to Project Fortify and Fly. Thanks to all for their leadership.

Youth

Are you in grades 6-12? Please join us for youth group activities! For more info, contact Scott at *scottgaspari@outlook.com or (Cell) 847-373-8825.*

LEARNING

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study

Men's Bible Study will not meet during Lent. Our Bible study will resume on Tuesday, April 6. 2-21 (the Tuesday after Easter). We will continue our Bible study of Acts at that time. For more information call Bob Kynast at 269-921-2786 or Don Hafer at 269-985-3637.

As the Bible says "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

March 7th, 6:30 p.m., we will gather to discuss Anne Griffin's book, "When All is Said". " If you had to pick five people to sum up your life, who would they be? If you were to raise a toast to each of them, what would you say? And what would you learn about yourself when all is said". (taken from book jacket) Griffin's tender tale about the complexity of life will stay with you long after all is said and done. Join us in this ZOOM meeting. Sign on information will be sent out to all that have expressed interest in our group. If you wish to be included or have questions please contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

PLEASE NOTE: We have a change of date for our April Meeting. We will meet on April 11th instead of April 4th. This will give you plenty of time to read "Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race", by Debby Irving. Irving is a "racial justice educator and writer, works with other white people to transform confusion into action" (book jacket). So much to discuss and learn from this book. If you haven't joined in on one of our discussions before, this would be a good place to start. Everyone is welcome. We encourage all readers to come share their ideas and opinions.

"She read books as one would breathe air, to fill up and live". (Annie Dillard)

Men's monthly Bible Devotions and Breakfast
Men's Bible Devotion will meet on March 6th, at 9:00 a.m. by Via Zoom. Contact Dennis Lundgren for more information.

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY
The Thursday Study will not meet until after Easter. Join us again on April 8 when we will continue our study of Rob Bell's book, "What is the Bible?" We meet each Thursday morning at 9:30 via Zoom. Please contact Pastor if you would like Zoom info or need information about purchasing a book. This is a great time to invite someone who lives at a distance and can join us via the internet! There are times when we have participants from 5 different states. What a joy!

THE BIBLE IN A YEAR
Have you ever wanted to read through the entire Bible in a year? Or do it again? A group of about 7 folks from Saron are doing just that. If you would like to join in, contact Pastor.

Women of the ELCA
Due to Wednesday Lenten services, Deborah Circle will **NOT** meet in March. The next meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 14 on Zoom.

Hospitality
Watch for more news as we get closer to getting back together in the building.

Outreach
BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN
On January 28th 164 people enjoyed a sack lunch at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. Saron members Deb Standen, Coanne Hohman, Sarah Deal Burrow, & Kate Ulrey volunteered to prepare the lunches and Pat Breyen made chocolate chip cookies which were enjoyed by all! Since hunger in our community is an ongoing concern the Soup Kitchen is open 7 days a week.

If you feel comfortable helping prepare a sack lunch for the Soup Kitchen please contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665].

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, & prayers. During this pandemic it is even more important to continue Saron's mission of *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

Large cans of fruit are always needed at the Soup Kitchen. Saron will collect them again after Saron's building is re-opened when they can be dropped off at the church. Any questions or to volunteer or provide cookies at a later date please contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE
Thank you to all who are joining the conversations that will help in the discernment of becoming a more intentionally inclusive community of faith. These discussions are ongoing. They will help us discern the possibility of becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

Watch for a special Inclusivity newsletter with updates, summaries of gatherings, resources and a questionnaire to help the task force plan future gatherings and needs. Folks with email will receive the newsletter via electronic means. Those without will receive a hard copy in the mail.

At any time, we encourage you to contact a member of the team with any of your questions/comments and wonderings. You may also visit the reconciling works website at reconcilingworks.org. Here is task force contact information.

Connor Ashley 269/313-0328 cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek 269/470-6062 mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks 517/930-0579 lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel 269/313-4062 kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church, N/WLM Synod) 231/670-0328
dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pastor Joan Oleson 269/983-1273
oleson@saronlutheran.org

Here is Saron's proposed Welcome Statement, as affirmed by the council.

"As a community of faith who joyfully shares God's love for all, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome."

Support

Tax Incentives during the Covid-19 Pandemic

"Above-the-line" tax deduction for charitable contributions

The federal government recently passed legislation to provide financial relief to families as a result of Covid-19. As part of the CARES Act, for the purpose of increasing the work of charitable organizations, individual taxpayers will receive new tax incentives for making charitable donations. The provision encourages individuals to contribute to religious, charitable, and educational organizations by creating a new "above-the-line" deduction (i.e. for taxpayers who take the standard deduction). This deduction permits deduction of up to $300 of annual monetary contributions.

This is applicable for tax years beginning after 2019, and does not sunset after 2020. A related provision increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by individuals who do itemize. For those individuals, the 50% of adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for cash contributions made in 2020.

For members over 72 years old drawing income from an IRA, the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is waived for 2020, thereby reducing your tax burden.

Effective January 1, 2020, the CARES Act waived RMDs for defined contribution 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, governmental 457(b) plans, and IRAs for calendar year 2020. The waiver applies to RMDs to be made in 2020 and to 2019 RMDs that were due by April 1, 2020 (if not already made in 2019). The good news is that Qualified Charitable Distributions can still be made directly from an IRA account to the church that will both benefit our ministry and reduce the member's taxable income.

As always, members are advised to check with their tax advisor for the latest information and interpretations before filing.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey to receive more information. Thanks! Joe Ulrey josephulrey@yahoo.com

Getting to know our mission partner, Trinity Lutheran Church in Battle Creek

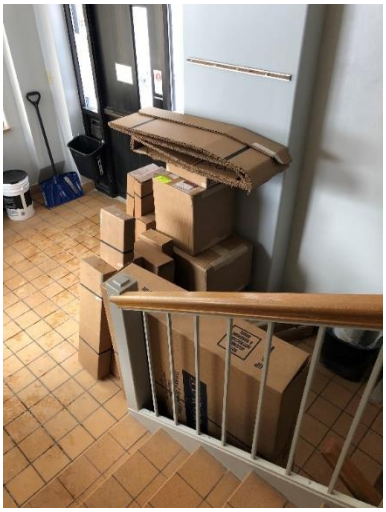
Trinity Lutheran, one of the oldest Lutheran churches in Battle Creek, is located in the Post neighborhood (did you know that both Kellogg and Post cereal companies originated in Battle Creek? Neighborhoods grew up where the workers from each company lived, close to their jobs). This is a neighborhood that has declined in many respects as the cereal companies have shifted production to other places and former residents have moved elsewhere.

However, with their Pastor Kjersten Sullivan, they are anchoring the neighborhood, partnering with another nearby Lutheran church on worship services and many projects, reaching out to the community in innovative ways. A Reconciling in Christ congregation since 2018, outreach is their middle name. Of particular note: The Battle Creek Woman's Co-op, supported by five local and regional organizations, is housed in their building. A non-profit since 2005, CO-OP members support each other, sharing resources to help sustain, enrich, and nurture its members and their families. Besides a food pantry, members meet regularly to talk about their life situations and needs, and they help each other in many creative ways – it could be anything from sewing to fixing someone's car, helping someone find suitable housing or get a job or enroll in a GED or other educational program, arrange for transportation, or help with child care – whatever is needed.

Trinity members help at a local soup kitchen, have planted community gardens (this year's garden provided fresh produce for 219 people from 59 families), and have spearheaded neighborhood cleanup and improvement projects. A summer program called Freeze Pop Tuesdays (which of course didn't happen this year) provides freeze pops plus fun activities for neighborhood children one afternoon each week. The funds that Saron sends to Trinity provide additional support for the many projects and activities of this busy redeveloping congregation.

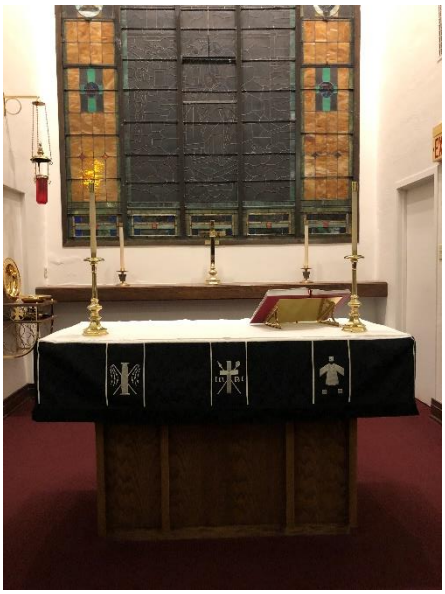
Upstairs painting being finished –
Closet in Margaret's office

The beauty of a newly painted wall



The arrival of music shelving for Marcus's office

Sermon notes



Ash Wednesday

Ashes – with gloves, (double) masks, and a q-tip! These were the only ashes given, unless one come to the drive-by option. Worship was on Zoom.

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

March 2021

Holy Week

Palm/Passion Sunday – March 28, 11 AM via Zoom
Maundy Thursday – April 1, 7 PM via Zoom
Good Friday – April 2, 7 PM via Zoom
The Vigil of Easter – April 3, 7 PM via Zoom
The Resurrection of our Lord, Easter – April 4,
11 AM via Zoom

March 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**2**	**3** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom 7:00 p.m. Worship Via Zoom	**4**	**5**	6 9:00 a.m. Men's Bible Devotion Meeting Via Zoom
7 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via Zoom	**8** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 6:00 p.m. Support Comm. Via Zoom Newsletter Articles due	**9**	**10** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom 7:00 p.m. Worship Via Zoom	**11**	**12**	13
14 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via Zoom	**15** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 7:00 p.m. Church Council meeting by Via Zoom	**16**	**17** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom 7:00 p.m. Worship Via Zoom	**18**	**19**	20
21 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via Zoom	**22** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**23**	**24** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom 7:00 p.m. Worship Via Zoom	**25**	**26**	27
28 Palm/Passion Sunday Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via Zoom	**29** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**30**	**31**			

IF YOU ARE NOT RECEIVING ZOOM INVITATIONS AND WOULD LIKE TO, PLEASE CONTACT PASTOR JOAN AT oleson@saronlutheran.org